But I Just Got Here

"He waited for you."

'But I just got here', I thought to myself, as I looked over my shoulder at Bob's nurse. She was folding up her stethoscope and putting it in the pocket of her tunic. A moment earlier she'd said softly, "he's gone."

I had just signed in at the Hero's Way nurse's station, at the Prescott Veteran Hospital barely 5 minutes earlier. Bob told me it was really 'death row', where the terminals were kept in a drug induced stupor until their bodies gave out. That's where we were. For a week I made the daily 120-mile pilgrimage, as I visited Bob every morning and evening. On Sunday evening I bounced into his well-lit room announcing loudly, 'Honey! I'm home!' I dropped my purse onto a chair by the door and stepped to the far side of Bob's bed. He was still and pale, his color ashen.

The always on television was perched at the end of a long, moveable arm that hung over Bob's bed. Instead of the black and white Turner Classics I watched, there was a soothing broadcast of Canadian Geese, milling about on a mist filled pond. They were splashing and honking serenely.

"This is nice." I said to Bob as I gathered up his surprisingly cold hand. "The geese honking, on a misty pond."

Two of the Hero's Way nurses came into our room and moved to Bob's bedside. I commented on Bob's faltered breathing. Wisely the head nurse asked me how we met.

I smiled, took a deep breath - then described how 3 years earlier I had found Bob's Arrowmaker Rock Shop. How I took his lapidary classes. How I made a pest of myself by helping him organize his workshop and office. As I blathered on, the head nurse nodded to the other nurse, asking her to go get her stethoscope from her locker.

Moments later she whispered, "He's gone." Standing upright she added, "He waited for you."

But I just got here….